THE VEDANTA KESARI

" Let the lion of Vedanta roar."

" Let me tell you, strength, strength is what we want
And the first step in getting strength is to uphold
The Upanishads and believe that 'I am the Atman.'"

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

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BY SRIMAT SWAMI SIVANANDA

AT THE FIRST CONVENTION OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION, 1926

CHILDREN OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA,

Please allow me to express my sincere felicitations at your congregating together in this Convention of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission held for the first time in the annals of the Ramakrishna Order. This convention, I am confident, will afford you a unique opportunity of comparing notes with one another regarding the various works carried on by different centres which you have met here to represent and also of hearing from the few surviving disciples of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna about the ideas and ideals of religion as expressed in and through the life of our Master, which will undoubtedly go a great way towards increasing the necessary solidarity of this organisation.

Had Swamiji been alive to-day, how warmly would he have greeted you all and showered his blessings on this gathering for bringing its deliberations to a successful end. The vision of another great soul who was regarded by the Master as next to Swami Vivekananda in his capacity for realising religious ideals comes irresistibly before our mind to-day. Indeed, if Swamiji was loved and cherished by the Master as the instrument by which to proclaim to the world his great mission in the realm of religion, Swami Brahmananda was no less regarded by him as the person to fill an important and

very responsible place in the scheme of his religious organisation. In fact, under the paternal care of the Raja Ma' the first President of the Ramakrishna Mission, the organisation that had but existed as a seed in the monastery of Baranagore assumed its present form of a mighty plant. Although we sadly miss them and some of our brother disciples such as Swami Premananda, Swami Ramakrishnananda and others, who had no mean share in contributing to the growth of this organisation, I invoke the benedictions of them all as well as that of our Master on this auspicious occasion.

I do not wish to give you here any detailed scheme for the furtherance of the objects of this convention. I shall be satisfied with telling you a few words in general out of my personal experience and I shall feel happy if I be of any service to you in bringing the deliberations to a successful issue.

Three decades ago, when the present activities of the Ramakrishna Order with its various ramifications all over the country and abroad were in the womb of futurity, when people knew Swami Vivekananda as but a preacher of Hinduism who upheld the cause of our Sanatana Dharma in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, the great Swami with the keen vision of a Prophet clearly foresaw the part that the teachings of his Master would play in shaping the destiny of humanity at large which had been lying then in the melting-pot of a great transition. The admonition of his Master to forego the selfish enjoyment of Samadhi and dedicate his life to the welfare of the many, seeing God alone immanent in the Universe, haunted him day and night ever since that memorable day when Sri Ramakrishna, in a mood of inward absorption, handed over to his illustrious disciple the precious fruits of his own realisations reaped in the course of the crowded period of his Sadhana, and made him the happy conduit for the flow of the elixir of spirituality that the world needed at a great psychological period of its history.

After the passing away of the Master, Swamiji formulated a unique scheme of thought to shape the future of his countrymen for the revivification of the world culture—a scheme which was the outcome of some of his strange personal experiences. The chief formative influences that went to determine his vision may be classified under the following heads : his Master's great prophecies regarding him ; his own training and realisations; his knowledge of Western philosophy,

*Swami Brahmananda.

story and Sanskrit scriptures ; the constant study of the life of his Guru before him in which he found the key and the verification of the Sastras; his travels all over his motherland in the course of which he availed himself of the opportunities of comparing her as she then was with what she had been, and of studying the life and thought of the people, their needs and possibilities and the diversities of their customs and faiths. Mixing with princes and peasants, with saints and scholars, he grasped in its comprehensiveness that vast whole of which his Master's life and personality was but an intense epitome. These then—the Sastras, the Guru and the Motherland—are the three notes that mingle themselves to form the symphony of Swamiji's life and works. These were the treasures which he wanted to offer to the world at large.

The above-mentioned experiences furnished him with the clue to the understanding of the prevalent disruptive world-forces which necessitated the advent of a Prophet. The first thing that arrested his thought was the prevailing bigotry among the different religions of the world and a very parochial conception regarding the ideal of religion itself. The different creeds which were thought of by the ancient seers as but different paths for the realisation of one and the same Truth, maintained a bellicose attitude towards one another. Like frogs in the well, the followers of a particular sect refused to see anything beyond the tip of their nose. And secondly, religion working on a narrow basis subjected itself to self-condemnation by ostracising the various schemes of life from its scope. Religion was conceived as having nothing to do with the actualities of our everyday life and therefore was left aside as an exclusive ideal to be pursued by the recluse in the forest or by men outside the pale of society. The highest maxim of Vedanta was considered as utterly incompatible with work. A permanent cleavage was made between work and worship, renunciation and service—an unfortunate factor which contributed most to our national degeneration. At this juncture, the world sorely needed a man who would formulate a religion that would be scientific and a science that would be religious.

Swami Vivekananda found in his Master such a man. Sri Ramakrishna stood at that point of equilibrium in which the great conflicts of life neutralise one another. In him was found a wonderful *rapprochement* of the various apparently

jarring creeds. First of all, by actual realisation, he demonstrated the practical utility of the three main systems of Indian philosophic thought—monism, qualified monism and dualism—to reach the ideal which is beyond any particular philosophical doctrine. Again, reaching the same goal by following some of the accepted paths, *viz.*, Sanatana Dharma, Islam and Christianity, he demonstrated the efficacy of these different religions intended to suit different temperaments. In him was revivified once more the long-forgotten ideal of the Vedas, एक सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति, "The Truth is one, but sages call it by different names." And lastly in his life was noticed a wonderfully harmonious reconciliation between such apparently incompatible ingredients as Jnana, Bhakti, Karma and Yoga. A man who held the highest Samadhi in the palm of his hand, also melted into tears at the mere mention of the name of God. He who had realised Truth by following the intricacies of the Yoga system was also found undergoing the pain of slow crucifixion in the midst of tremendous activities for distributing the fruits of his own realisations among fit recipients. This all-sided man appealed irresistibly to the mind of his disciple, who clearly saw that the future world, reborn and rejuvenated, must bear the stamp of his *guru's* genius.

The Buddhistic organisation of ancient India as well as the discipline and organised effort of the modern progressive West, where also he had travelled a great deal, might have suggested to the mind of Swamiji the idea of an institution that would, under proper discipline, make a practical application of the teachings of his Master. Swami Vivekananda, a practical idealist that he was, soon after his return from the West, formulated the idea—at once original and bold—of a Math which would be the fittest mirror wherein future generations would find a true reflex of the life and thought of Sri Ramakrishna.

As the very basis of the Math we find the following words of the Swamiji. "This Math is established," said he, "for the attainment of one's own liberation as well as to get equipped for the amelioration of the world in all possible ways by following the path laid down by Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Deva. Another Math working on this line will be established for women as well." These pregnant words of the Swami Vivekananda form the corner-stone, as it were, of the Math established by him. A proper understanding of these words, which mean much more than what appears on the surface, will

supply the pivot of the entire organisation controlled and managed by the members of the Ramakrishna Order.

At the very outset we find that he has linked up into a single purpose two apparently diverse ideals, *viz.*, one's own liberation and service for the welfare of the world. Through this Math he has sought to weld together the ideals of renunciation and service, work and worship, which, as people generally believe, cannot possibly combine without proving detrimental to each other. According to his ideal, the attainment of personal liberation need not necessarily contradict the dedication of life to the service of humanity, nor should the latter in its highest aspect be thought of as apart from the activities of the man who is eager to pierce through the mist that has covered the effulgent Truth lying within his own self. If the highest illumination aims at nothing short of effacing all distinctions between the individual soul and the Universal Soul, and if its ideal be to establish a total identity of one's own self with Brahman existing everywhere, then it naturally follows that the highest spiritual experience of the aspirant cannot but lead him to a state of exalted self-dedication to the welfare of all. He makes the last divine sacrifice by embracing the universe after transcending its limitations which are the outcome of ignorance. Swamiji wanted to make the members of his Math the most willing instruments in the hand of God for the fruition of His work, the fulfilment of which task must confer upon them the felicity of the highest spiritual illumination. Sri Ramakrishna used to tell us again and again that to enjoy a sweet mango all by oneself is a much lower ideal than to share it with others.

Again, looking from an ordinary standpoint we find Swamiji, the great Acharya that he was, giving us the ideal of an organisation wherefrom its members will get the greatest facilities of an integral realisation, rich and full in its conception and attainment. The aspirant will have to combine in his Sadhana elements of the four accepted paths—Jnana, Karma, Bhakti and Yoga, laying greater stress on a particular process according to his individual temperament. Not a single one of these items must be left out, otherwise the result will be a little less than complete. Thus we shall presently see in the ways prescribed for the members of the Math a wonderful synthesis of meditation, worship, study and work.

That the Math must not limit itself within a narrow precinct but consecrate itself to a wider scope of activities, is

clearly evident from the following words of Swamiji. " Such Maths we must establish, " says he, " all over the world. Some countries stand in need of spirituality only, whereas others are in need of a few worldly amenities. We must lead nations and individuals to the realm of spirituality through paths suited to them by fulfilling the respective wants that such nations and individuals may be most suffering from." " The first and foremost necessity in India, " Swamiji goes on, " is the propagation of education and religious ideas among the lower classes. It is impossible for hungry men to become spiritual unless food is provided for them. Therefore, above all, our paramount duty is to show them new ways of food supply. "

These clear words unmistakably show what Swamiji conceived to be one of the principal items in the spiritual exercises of the inmates of his Math. So far as Indian work was concerned, the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna acknowledging Swamiji as the expounder of his life and teachings accept a programme of activities which have hitherto been considered as belonging to the secular domain and therefore left outside the scheme of life of those who wanted to attain the highest goal of existence here and now. It is not work, the Gita and other Sastras say, that demeans or elevates a man, but it is his attitude towards work that is the real determining factor. It stands to reason also that if with love and devotion a Sadhaka can discover Divinity in mere images, he can, certainly with much more ease, realise God through worship of man—surely a higher creation than the inanimate objects —if worship be performed there with the same amount of sincerity, devotion and love. Without doubt, man is the highest symbol of God and his worship is the highest form of worship on earth.

This ideal of Sadhana conceived by Swamiji further developed into a practical suggestion which he made regarding the plan of work of the Math. " This, then, is our aim, " he said, "that this Math will have to be slowly developed into a finished university, where the culture of philosophy and religion must proceed along with a fully equipped Technical Institute. This is our primary duty. Other branches of study will be added later on to its curriculum. " A very bold conception indeed ! Nowhere in it is to be found the slightest trace of a compromise with the stereotyped ancient ideal of leaving out works from the conception of an ideal religion. This is the

special significance of the message of Swamiji to his countrymen. In order to save the Math from the inevitable calamity that had befallen similar institutions in olden times, Swamiji warned its guardians to see that it must not lapse into a mere Thakurbadi or a chapel where superficial ceremonies take the place of the spirit of the thing— बाबाजीदेर ठाकुरबाडी to quote his own words. " Such a chapel," said he, " may prove beneficial to a few or satisfy the passing curiosity of a handful, but this Math will prove of inestimable value to the whole world. " This, then, is the basic conception of the Math founded by Swami Vivekananda.

A Math based on such a lofty ideal reflecting the life of Sri Ramakrishna, its guardian angel, cannot be anything but catholicity itself. Humanity has never before seen another life like that of Sri Ramakrishna synthesising the highest ideals of knowledge, devotion, work and Yoga. Those only who mould their lives after the perfect ideal of Sri Ramakrishna's character can be truly said as representing the ideas of the Math. Therefore Swamiji enjoined that the special aim of this Math would be the formation of character by combining the above-mentioned four paths, and that the spiritual exercises that would bring about such a synthesis would alone be accepted as the Sadhana of this Math. " Therefore, " he said emphatically, "everyone must bear in mind that a man who shows the slightest deficiency in any one of the above-mentioned ways has not been properly cast in the mould of Sri Ramakrishna's life. He who consecrates himself to the service of others does a nobler work than he who tries to work out his own liberation. " This is really the special feature of this Math. Before the advent of Sri Ramakrishna it was thought perfectly natural, nay inevitable, that one system of religious thought alone could flourish in a Math. But realising the three main systems of Indian philosophical thought as but different readings of the Absolute, Sri Ramakrishna made it possible to establish a Math on the bedrock of transcendental experience wherefrom equal utility of all these systems of philosophy can be boldly proclaimed as leading to the realisation of the highest Impersonal Truth. To save his Math from the contingency of some unavoidable evil results, Swamiji laid equal emphasis on the culture of the head, heart and hands. He knew that mere work uninspired by religion and unaccompanied by meditation, discrimination and other spiritual exercises, degenerates into a kind of pure social activity.

Such mechanical work, not attuned to a higher conception of life, piles bondage upon bondage. Hands can work for the desired end when vision is clarified and the heart finds facilities for its full expression. Again, simple discrimination or study of the scriptures ends in mere intellectual gymnastics, dry and insipid, if it does not express its conclusions in terms of the actualities of life. Similarly, devotion degenerates into meaningless and often dangerous sentimentalism if it dissociates itself from discrimination and work. To know Truth, to feel its presence in the innermost recesses of one's heart and to realise its expression all around—these are but three aspects of the same highest divine realisation. His ideal monk was one who would be now absorbed in meditation and the next moment be prepared to explain the difficult intricacies of the Sastras. The same monk again would with equal zeal cultivate the field and sell the produce of it in the market carrying it on his own head.

The following is the clear instruction of the Swamiji regarding the programme of work of the Math:—

" Want of culture brings about the degeneration of a religious sect. Therefore culture of knowledge should be practised in the Math without intermission. Luxury crushes a Math when its members forget the ideals of renunciation and austerity. Therefore these ideas must be always kept bright in the organisation. Dissemination of ideas adds to the vigour and vitality of an organisation. Therefore this Math must never stop its preaching activities.

" In a narrow society religion is generally seen to possess a certain depth and intensity like that of a small rivulet. Similarly, it is noticed that the depth and intensity diminish in proportion as the ideas of liberality creep into it. But the strangest thing is that transcending all such historical precedents, ideas broader than the sky itself and deeper than the ocean found a wonderful reconciliation in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. It is thus proved to the hilt that the greatest catholicity and the greatest extensity can exist side by side with the utmost intensity in an individual, and a society can also be established on such a basis, because society is but an aggregate of individuals. " Of course a man of wide and catholic outlook of Sri Ramakrishna's stamp cannot be met with every now and then. But such a want can be compensated and the integrity and cohesion of the Math kept intact, if its different members holding Sri Ramakrishna as their ideal and following

different paths of Sadhana according to their temperaments are accepted as integral parts of the institution and equal facilities afforded to all for individual growth and expression. Sri Ramakrishna may not exist any more in this physical body, but so long as his catholicity be kept untarnished, the Math will certainly feel his presence. Swamiji also declared, " This Math represents the physical body of Sri Ramakrishna. He is always present in this institution. The injunction of the whole Math is the injunction of Sri Ramakrishna. One who worships it, worships him as well. And one who disregards it, disregards our Lord. "

An institution with such a catholic outlook may contain, to all appearances, elements of disintegration—a fact to which Swamiji was very keenly alive. Again, all outward dissensions are preceded and accentuated by mental disruptions. Therefore Swamiji laid down unity of purpose as the greatest force for maintaining the integrity of the institution. All members of the Math must repeatedly study and think on this conception of the Swamiji regarding the Math and try to translate it into practice in their individual life. "Mutual love, obedience to the authorities, forbearance and an unalloyed purity can alone maintain unity and an *esprit de corps* among the members of the Math "—and save them from the calamity of disintegration. Fame is the last infirmity of noble minds and it seduces even the noblest soul from his path of duty. Hankering for fame causes jealousy which in the end spells ruin to the organisation. " Sri Ramakrishna never cared for name and fame. We are his followers and servants. So we must always set aside all allurements of name and fame. Our ideal in life is to carry out his commands, leading pure lives ourselves and teaching others to do so. " A great responsibility rests on our shoulders. We must know that Sri Ramakrishna sits on the crest of the wave that has already gone forth to raise humanity from its present state of depression—and it is through the members of the Math that people will judge of Sri Ramakrishna. Our work will proclaim his glory. We are his representatives wherever we may go or live. People will see in the members of this Math a reflection of Sri Ramakrishna. Consciousness of such responsibility cannot but bring about a unity of purpose among the different members of the Math.

A spirit of obedience on the part of the workers and that of willing service on the part of the leaders must pervade the

entire atmosphere of the Math. The success of an organisation depends a great deal upon the capacity of its leader. The faculty of organisation is entirely absent in our nature. This has become our peculiar national trait. But the secret of success lies in the absence of jealousy. The leader must be always ready to concede to the opinion of his brother workers and try always to conciliate. " Don't try to be a ruler, " Swamiji said addressing the leaders. " He is the best ruler who can serve well. Never attempt to guide others or rule others or, as the Americans say, boss others. Be the servant of all. Nobody will come to help you, if you assume the role of a great leader ; kill self first if you want to succeed. The great secret of success is never to figure out big plans at first, but begin slowly, feel the ground and proceed up and up." Again, "You must go and seize the crocodile first if you are told to do so and then argue. " This should be the attitude of every worker. With great agony Swamiji said, " If there is any crying sin in India at this time it is our slavery. Every one wants to command and no one wants to obey. This is owing to the absence of that wonderful Brahmacharya system of yore. First learn to obey. Always first learn to be a servant and then you will be a fit master. The worker must carry out the orders of his superior, leaving aside even the consideration of his life. Fear is at the root of all misery. It is the greatest sin. Therefore we must overcome it altogether. The first and foremost cause that separates a brother from his brother is to speak ill of one another behind the back. The members of this Math must studiously avoid it. If a member must say anything against his brother, it must be confided to him alone. Not one among the followers of Sri Ramakrishna is bad. Had he been so he could not find entrance into the Order. Every member of the Math must deeply ponder over it before judging others." These are some of the very practical suggestions which Swamiji has given for bringing about the spirit of co-operation and co-ordination among the different members and different centres of the Belur Math. His warning to the recalcitrant member still rings clear in our ears. " To make a great future India, " Swamiji said, " the whole secret lies in organisation, accumulation of power, co-ordination of wills,—organisation alone, is the primary means for all progress and the only way for the conservation of energy. The curse of the entire organisation must fall on the head of him who would try to bring about its

disruption and disintegration by word, thought and action, Nothing but ruin awaits him in this world or in that to come."

The present division of the activities of the Ramakrishna Order into those of the Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Math, which may give rise to a little confusion, is a purely technical one. It is generally believed that the Math is, as it were, a place for meditation and study alone, whereas philanthropic works have been relegated to the scope of the Mission proper. Though in practice it has become so in some cases, it is necessary to clear up any confusion that may exist in this respect. From what I have said before you will clearly understand that the Math conceived by Swamiji includes everything—work as well as worship, social service as well as meditation and study. As we have seen before, he wanted to incorporate with the Belur Math a full-fledged university, including in its curriculum the study of religion and philosophy as well as that of technology. In his time, no necessity was felt for making a formal separation of the Order into the Math and the Mission. To give effect to his ideals, he established an Association on the 1st May, 1897, to unite the monastic and lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Deva in a common oragnised effort for the service of humanity. As the Association, which had been named the Ramakrishna Mission, thrived and its activities widened, it was given, to remove some purely technical difficulties, a legal status by registering it in 1909 under Act XXI of 1860 of the Governor General of India. Thenceforth on legal grounds alone a formal distinction has been made between the Math and the Mission. Really speaking, for the convenience of the public, a part of the Math itself has been given, as it were, the appellation of the Ramakrishna Mission. All the members of the Ramakrishna Order, whatever may be their sphere of work for the time being, belong in essence to the Ramakrishna Math conceived by the Swamiji. Any attempt to make a cleavage between the existing Math and Mission works is distinctly against the ideal of Swamiji and therefore stands self-condemned. Any attempt to find a distinction between the ideals of the Math and the Mission is unholy and dangerous. Be good yourself and help others to be so—was the injunction of Swamiji to every member of the Math. And he wanted to give effect to this by a combination of the four accepted paths of Sadhana, allowing, as we have said before, fuller expression to a partiular path according to the temperament of the as-

pirant. Hence there is no room for a clash of ideals. To try to find a distinction between the ideals of the Math and the Mission is like trying to distinguish between two facets of the same coin. Therefore those who are engaged in philanthrophic works should be considered as important members of the Order as those who have devoted themselves to meditation alone in a cave of the Himalayas, provided all of them acknowledge their allegiance to the ideals of Swamiji. Those who retire from the arena of activity for a time and lead exclusively a life of meditation and study with a view to equip themselves more fully for the work, are regarded as invaluable assets for the growth and vitality of the organisation. The Math is a picturesque bouquet containing the flowers of Jnana, Bhakti, Yoga and Karma whose variegated colours and sweet aroma contribute to its richness and beauty.

Well, friends, I have told you what I had got to say. From my little experience I tell you, chidren of Sri Ramakrishna, that our organisation lasts as long as the spirit of God pervades its atmosphere. Love, catholicity, purity and selflessness are the corner-stones of our organisation. No man-made laws can save it from ruin when selfishness eats into its vitals. If you all try to become perfect—keeping intact your allegiance to this Math which gives you every kind of facility for reaching that perfection, you will add a leaf to the life of the organisation. Swamiji shed his blood for the Math. His spirit is still hovering over us. This Math is the visible body of Sri Ramakrishna. All those that have gone before us are still with us in spirit to help us in all possible ways. We must unfurl all sails so that we may take advantage of the divine wind that is ever blowing to take us to the destined goal.

Religion is the great mission of India. This is the only gift that we can bestow on the world. From time immemorial religious ideas flowing from this land have been contributing thier quota to shape the civilisations of the world. We are still alive in spite of the many vicissitudes that have befallen this unfortunate race during the last ten centuries, only because religion forms the backbone of our life. With us God is the central pillar around which move all other schemes of life individual or collective. True greatness is estimated here in the scales of spirituality. In pursuance of the great law enunciated in the *Gita*, the Lord has again incarnated Himself in this age as Sri Ramakrishna to revive the lost ideals of religion. Incarnations and Prophets came before him in numbers

to show us light in the midst of darkness, to elevate us from national depression. But the darkness of former ages that necessitated the advent of Prophets, compared with the darkness that has overwhelmed us at present, may be said to be light itself. The former national depressions compared with our present one look like mere mud-puddles. Therefore to extricate us and to disentangle the world from the tentacles of dark material forces, God has, through His infinite grace, incarnated Himself again in the fullest degree. "Through thousands of years' chiselling and modelling, the lives of the great prophets of yore come down to us; and yet, in my opinion, not one stands so high in brilliance as that life which I saw with my own eyes, under whose shadow I have lived, at whose feet I have learnt everything. Before this great wave of spirituality there have been whirlpools of lesser manifestations all over society. It came, at first unknown, unperceived and unthought of, assuming proportions, swallowing, as it were, and assimilating all the other little whirlpools, becoming immense, till it assumed the shape of a tidal wave falling upon society with a power that none can resist." That great personality, the greatest that the world has ever seen, is behind you. Our forefathers performed great deeds, you must do greater deeds still. Each one of us will have to believe that everyone else in the world has done his work, and the only work remaining to be done to make the world perfect, has to be done by himself. This is the responsibility we have to take upon ourselves.

In old Buddhistic monasteries a sincere effort was made to do good to the world through organised efforts. And they succeeded a great deal in their object. Since the record of history, Buddhistic monks, through their organisations, have perhaps put the greatest lever for humanity's good. If the unknown history of some of the principal existing religions and systems of philosophy be ever written, the world will know how much these intrepid monks contributed to their growth and development. So long as those monasteries kept intact the pristine ideals of purity and renunciation, they were irresistible wherever they went. But when that spirit waned the religion of Buddha showed signs of decadence. This is a great historical lesson we are to learn. In the subsequent history of India we find occasionally an individual rising to the highest pinnacle of perfection, but he did not care much for people

around him. Undoubtedly he realised a great ideal. But the ideal itself, for want of a suitable medium of expression, died of inanition in the course of a generation or two. This is another great lesson. Again, we find during the last few centuries the growth and development of Maths and Ashrams in the country in a very large number. Though they might have benefited a comparatively small number of people who gave up the world, by providing them with facilities for their individual spiritual growth, they could not be of much help to society at large, because they omitted from their scheme of spiritual exercises a spirit of service for humanity. This is the third lesson of history. Swamiji took all these facts into consideration before setting forth the ideal of his Math. Dedication of our life to the attainment of our own liberation as well as to the amelioration of the world at large—आमनी मीक्षार्थं जगद्धिताय च —is what he has chosen for us—the ideal of all ideals. I have my fullest confidence in you all who have been earnestly endeavouring to realise this lofty ideal in life. You do not hesitate to brush aside any personal considerations, however strong, for the realisation of this ideal—and I clearly find Sri Ramakrishna, our Light and Guide, working from behind you and through you. His benign hands are at the back of all of your activities. It is his grace alone that has enabled your works to be crowned with success within such a short period of time. So long as you have faith in him, so long as you consider yourselves as humble instruments in his hands, no power on earth, however great, can shake you from your position by so much as a jot or tittle. Putting your faith in our Lord everyone of you can say, "Let me stand where I am and I shall move the world." I exhort you with all the earnestness at my command not to be disturbed or discouraged by momentary failures. Failures are but stepping-stones to success. Viewing success and failure alike, work on with unwavering faith in him and victory will be yours at the end. I only pray that your surrender may be complete. Be like the arrow that darts from the bow. Be like the hammer that falls on the anvil. Be like the sword that pierces its object. The arrow does not murmur if it misses the target. The hammer does not fret if it falls on a wrong place. And the sword does not lament if it is broken in the hands of its wielder. Yet there is a joy in being made, used and broken; and an equal joy in being finally set aside.

I invoke the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna on you all so that *he may give you strength and courage to realise* Truth in this very life.

Let the atmosphere of this convention vibrate with a spirit of love and benediction. Let us, in conclusion, say with the great Indian sages and echo the voice of the Vedas :

मधु वाता ऋतायाते ॥ मधु क्षरन्ति सिन्धवः ॥ माध्वीर्नः सन्त्वोषधीः ॥ मधु नक्तमुतोषसो ॥ मधुमत्पार्थिवं रजः ॥ मधु द्यौरस्तु नः पिता ॥ मधुमान्नो वनस्पतिर्मधुमां अस्तु सूर्यः ॥ माध्वीर्गावो भवन्तु नः ॥ ओं मधु ॥ ओं मधु ॥ ओं मधु ॥

" Sweet blow the winds and the rivers scatter sweetness ! May the herbs and trees be full of honeyed sweetness ! May night and morning yield us joy ! May the dust of the earth be sweet unto us ! May father Heaven give us happiness ! May the sun shower Bliss on us ! May the cows yield us all-sweetness ! Om Joy ! Sweetness ! Bliss ! "

RECEPTION ADDRESS

BY SRIMAT SWAMI SARADANANDA

CHAIRMAN OF THE RECEPTION COMMITTEE OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION CONVENTION, 1926

IT seems to be the invariable rule that every newly started movement should pass through the two stages of opposition and indifference before its principles are accepted by society and humanity at large. And as human nature is the same everywhere, we find the display of this rule alike in the East and the West. Start new ideas of reform on social, moral, political or religious lines, wherever you like, and you will find the people around you opposing them. And the more radical the ideas of your reform movement, the more vehement will be the opposition. People will say the principles of the movement will ruin the very foundation of everything that is good and useful. But if the movement has real life in it and is based on essential truths governing human nature and its various functions and activities, it will survive, grow and drive its roots gradually into men's hearts, in spite of that opposition. This opposition from outside helps the movement to concentrate its energies and bring into expression and life the fundamental truths on which it stands; so we cannot call it bad after all.

The opposition wears away after a period and gives place to indifference, when those who opposed the movement at first begin to say that after all there is nothing so very new in it. For, have we not in such and such passages of our old records and scriptures, the mention of the principles which it preaches? That is proof sufficient that our forefathers knew and carried them into practice long ago. So we need not think much of it. The movement thus spreads unhindered far and wide in this second stage and finds a secure footing in due time by the recognition of its existence and utility by society.

So at the end of this second stage we find it accepted by a concensus of public opinion, as it were, and the ranks of its votaries, henceforth, swell speedily with its proving itself worthy of this social acceptance and recognition. But this third stage of public acceptance is not to be regarded as the millennium in the progressive career of it. For, security of

position brings a relaxation of spirits and energy, and a sudden growth of extensity quickly lessens the intensity and unity of purpose that were found among the promoters of the movement. Hence in place of outside opposition we find the budding forth in it of an internal opposition due to the varied opinions of its members, and later, in place of the former spirit of sacrifice for truth, a struggle to maintain the secure social position by compromising truth with half-truths and a clinging more to the appearance than to the spirit of things, which characterise the propensity of an easy-going existence. And if the leaders of the movement are not awake and watchful enough, or neglect to grapple the situation by finding remedies to check and stop the springing up of those evils, you can well imagine the result. First and foremost, the unifying bond of love slackens with the incoming of selfish motives, and its members losing sight of the wide outlook of the welfare and improvement of the movement as a whole, form themselves into detached groups with a view to improve and make permanent separate parts of it as unrelated to the whole. The principle of disintegration entering thus into its body through this narrow channel, goes on dividing the work to pieces. And in course of time disobedience to superiors, vanity, indolence and a whole host of other faults crop up within the work to ruin it for ever.

The Ramakrishna movement had passed through the two stages of opposition and indifference, a few years before the time when its great leader the Swami Vivekananda left us after giving it a working shape and organisation in the name of the Ramakrishna Mission. Since then the Mission has been working steadily along that line for the last quarter of a century and has brought itself to that point, at present, where it has found recognition and acceptance in the hearts of the people of India and of several countries abroad. From a simple organisation working mostly in Bengal it has in this short period spread itself quickly to all the Presidencies and provinces of India, nay to Burma, Ceylon and the Federated Malay States and to the far West, America and England, and incidentally to some other parts of Europe as well. You, friends, and your brother co-workers had the good fortune to render yourselves willing instruments in the hand of the Master to bring about this glorious end. You started centres of philanthropic works at Murshidabad, Benares, Kankhal and

Brindaban, depending solely on the Lord and have proved before the public what your prophetic leader said in some of his speeches that not money but men—men fired with zeal for a noble cause and having character and fixity of purpose—are wanted to render such works permanent and successful. You started preaching and educational institutions at Madras, Bangalore and many other places in Southern India and comparatively lately at Nagpur, Bombay, Kuala Lumpur and Rangoon, which have drawn the attention and respectful co-operation of the local public. And by your frequent relief works to help the poor sufferers in famine, flood, fire and plague-stricken areas all over India, you have helped to arouse and establish the present confidence in the name of the Ramakrishna Mission in the hearts of the people at large. You have stuck to your places with wonderful patience and perseverance for twenty years and more, nay in some cases for a whole life-time since relieving hands could not be found.

Yea, the Master and His chosen leader have done wonderful work to help poor India and other more fortunate countries through you ! But still greater works remain yet to be accomplished, and the Master and the Swami will do it all in time, even through you, if you keep close to their purity and singleness of purpose, their sacrifice and self-surrender for all that is good, true and noble, and follow their footsteps with that meek and humble spirit with which you have followed them. For, if we come forward to do their work in any other spirit and think too much of ourselves, because we have been chosen and allowed to do their work thus far, we shall find to our great regret that we have been hopelessly rejected and that others have been chosen instead to take our places.

The present convention affords you the rare privilege of meeting many of your senior co-workers and elders to profit by their experiences, of discussing and settling future plans of work with them for the welfare of the Mission as a whole, and for warding off the dangers and evils that threaten to overtake all institutions at this critical stage of their acceptance by the public. Join it with all sincerity and openness with a view to make a thorough and sifting inquiry of the whole work to find out if we have swerved from our glorious Ideal in our struggle to keep up to the demands of this unique extension. Hold fast to the Ideal, for the Ideal has in it the stored up energy, the Kundalini, behind every movement—and judge yourselves and others by its effulgent light. Thus alone,

can you make the convention a success for the permanency and glorification of the work. Remember it is not a new and untried path through which we are inviting you to travel. The Buddhists tried the method, of old, several times with the enormous spread of their congregation, and warded off the ruin of their noble work for a long time. And the followers of Jesus the Christ and of the prophet Mahomed had recourse to the same method from time to time in their past history. The plan of work, therefore, is not new, but the success of its application depends entirely upon the sincerity and unity of purpose of those who would apply it to their special case. So in the words of our Leader, I call on every one of you to arise, awake, and stop not till the goal has been reached,—till by the grace of the Master you have accomplished the noble task that you have imposed upon yourselves. Friends, brethren, children, co-labourers in the vineyard of Sri Ramakrishna, I welcome you with all my heart in the name of our hallowed Master, our illustrious leader, the Swami Vivekananda, and our late President, the best beloved of the Master, the Swami Brahmananda.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION AND THE IDEAL OF SERVICE*

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

"The national ideals of India are renunciation and service. Intensify her in these channels and the rest will take care of itself."

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

SPEAKING on the Ramakrishna Maths and Mission, Lord Ronaldshay says in his *Heart of Aryavarta*: "Associated with the Monastic Order (of Sri Ramakrishna) which consists of Sannyasins and Brahmacharins is a Mission, these twin organisations standing for renunciation and service respectively, declared by the late Swami Vivekananda to be the two national ideals of India. The Mission undertakes service of all kinds, social, charitable and educational. The monasteries are dedicated to the perpetuation through their spiritual culture of the great Ideal and Revelation which Sri

*A paper read at the Ramakrishna Math and Mission Convention, 1926.

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa embodied in his life." A word of explanation is necessary here. The twin ideals of renunciation and service are inseparable like the twin institutions of Math and Mission. In the monasteries of the Order of Sri Ramakrishna, greater stress is laid on renunciation and spiritual culture as ordinarily understood, and in the various branches of the Ramakrishna Mission greater emphasis is placed on what is popularly known as service. True service, as we shall presently see, is a form of spiritual culture.

The object of Swami Vivekananda's founding the twin institutions of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission was to carry on the Mission of his great Master, and this by bringing into existence a band of workers who would strive their utmost for आत्मनो मोक्षार्थं जगद्धिताय च—"for both the emancipation of the Self and the well-being of the world." And with this end in view, the Swami tried to express the ancient monastic ideals not only through the old methods of quiet spiritual practice and silent preaching, but also through what the modern world calls service—but service spiritualised. All persons, irrespective of caste or creed, race or nationality, are to be looked upon as veritable manifestations of the Divine, and served according to their needs—physical, intellectual or spiritual.

Renunciation in its highest form means self-effacement or the killing of the ego with all our base desires and passions. It implies the sacrifice of the lower self with a view to manifest the higher. As Swami Vivekananda puts it : "We must die, that is certain ; let us die then for a good cause. Let all our actions tend towards the sacrifice of self." The body that is nourished by food should be held as a sacrifice to the welfare of humanity. The mind that is developed through study must be laid down for the service of all groping in mental darkness. The soul that is evolved through mental discipline and religious practice should be utilised for the spiritual ministration of the world-weary souls hankering for the higher life. It is thus that our mortal death can be turned into our spiritual birthday. And this is the ideal of renunciation realising itself in service that Swami Vivekananda placed before the members of the Ramakrishna Mission and the world at large.

The Ramakrishna Mission is pre-eminently a religious body, its service forming a part of its Sadhana or spiritual practice. It stands for the universal ideals of religion. Its

numerous preaching centres in India and America are trying to spread through the life and thought of their members a true knowledge of Religion in its all-embracing aspect and also to promote fellowship among the followers of the different religions of the world, which are in fact, as Sri Ramakrishna realised, so many forms of the One Eternal and Universal Religion. Its educational institutions aim to impart to the students, and that in a spirit of service, the best cultures of the East and the West, and to instil into their mind moral and spiritual ideals which are essential for the building up of true character. Its permanent charitable centres in which the monastic members themselves mostly perform the duties of the doctor and the nurse and also render other forms of service, are attempting to alleviate the miseries and sufferings of the poor and the destitute in various towns and villages. Its temporary relief centres, often conducted with great personal risk, render service to the afflicted during the prevalence of plague, influenza, flood, famine and other widespread calamities.

What was the mainspring of Swami Vivekananda's inspiration ?

The source of Swamiji's inspiration was the life and teachings of his great Master. The service to the Daridra Narayanas was practically inaugurated by Sri Ramakrishna himself during the sixties of the last century. While going on a pilgrimage to Northern India with Babu Mathuranath Biswas—son-in-law of Rani Rasmani who founded the Temple of Dakshineswar—Sri Ramakrishna was distressed to see the miserable condition of the people of a village near Deoghar. And moved with great sympathy and compassion he said to Mathur Babu, " You are the steward of the Divine Mother. Feed these poor people one day nicely and give each one of them a piece of cloth. " But Mathur Babu hesitated. The pilgrimage he had undertaken was a very expensive one. And the people whom Sri Ramakrishna wanted to be fed and clothed were very large in number. Funds might fall short during the journey. But Sri Ramakrishna was inexorable. He was weeping to see the abject poverty and misery of the men, women and children before him and exclaimed—" I am not going to Benares. I prefer to remain with these helpless and destitute people. " Saying this, he took his seat among the poor—the objects of his compassion. Mathur Babu had no other alternative. He ordered bales of cloth from Calcutta

He fed the people sumptuously and distributed the cloths among them. Sri Ramakrishna's joy knew no bounds and he readily consented to proceed on his pilgrimage.

What is the motive of this service ? To quote Sri Ramakrishna's own words, " If one gives away anything in charity with the spirit of non-attachment, he does it for his own good, and not for simply doing good to others. He thereby serves God who resides in all beings, and service unto God means helping one's own self. If a person serves God manifest in all beings—not only in man, but also in other creatures—without craving for name and fame, or for going to heaven after death, and expects no return from those whom he serves—such work is really work without motive, and it benefits him alone. " This is the spirit of service as laid down by Sri Ramakrishna. Work, thus performed in the right spirit of Karma Yoga, becomes worship, and is one of the most efficient means of self-purification and God-realisation.

This ideal was impressed by the Master on the mind of Swami Vivekananda during the latter's days of discipleship. Srimat Swami Saradanandaji narrates an incident in his life of the Master,—*Sri Ramakrishna Lila-Prasanga* :— One day when Sri Ramakrishna was seated in his room at Dakshineswar, surrounded by Narendranath and other disciples, the topics under discussion drifted to the ideal of showing mercy to all creatures. " Show mercy to all creatures ! " —the Master repeated these words and passed into a deep trance. On coming back to the state of semi-consciousness, he took upon the thread of the discussion and explained the true import of the ideal of charity :—" Kindness to all creatures ! Fie upon thee, man ! An insignificant being thyself, how canst thou show mercy to God's creatures ? Who art thou to show mercy ? No, no, it can't be mercy. Rather serve all *Jivas*—all beings—as Shiva—God Himself. " Narendranth of all others understood the deep significance of the words of the Master and found in them a wonderful illumination. In these words he got the clue to his Practical Vedanta—by which the highest ideals of the Vedanta—the property of the recluse of the forest and the cave—could be brought to the city and the market place, and applied to the life of all—monks as well as householders. To attain to the highest knowledge—the knowledge of Unity— a person need no longer cut himself away from society and root out from his

heart the noble impulses of love and service. By looking upon all as embodiments of God and serving them with reverence and love, the spiritual aspirant is sure to be able to purify his mind of the sense of superiority and arrogance that often accompanies our ordinary acts of charity, and thereby to realise ultimately the God in all beings as also in himself. Narendranath grasped the spirit of service as interpreted by Sri Ramakrishna, and expressed the hope of proclaiming it some day, if the Lord so willed. The Lord did will as the Swami hoped. And Swami Vivekananda became the messenger of the sublime gospel of service which he carried to the doors of all—learned and ignorant, rich and poor, Brahmin and Pariah alike.

The path of service is a sure means to God-realisation. And the God whom Sri Ramakrishna and, following him, his greatest disciple Swami Vivekananda worshipped and realised in their own lives was no colourless abstraction. It is the sole, living reality which is absolute and relative, transcendent and immanent at the same time. And the universal love which swayed these twin souls was born of their vision of the One in the Many. "I see Him," declared Sri Ramakrishna, "in all and as all. Men and other creatures,—all appear as veritable figures skin-bound, but with the Lord within ! The one Substance has taken the forms of the cosmos with all living creatures. I realise that all come of the one substance." Thus God may be worshipped not only in the temple of brick and mortar, but more than that, in the temple of flesh and blood—in the tabernacle of the human body. If God is in every being, does He not exist in the sick and the diseased, in the ignorant and the illiterate, in the weary soul yearning for the waters of Life ? It is this vision of the One dwelling in all that made Swami Vivekananda declare with all the passion of his soul :—"May I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum-total of all souls. And above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God, the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship." He says further : "Blessed are we that we are given the privilege of working for Him, not helping Him. Cut out this word help from your mind. You worship. Stand in this reverent attitude to the whole universe."

There exists a good deal of misunderstanding as regards the religion of service proclaimed by the Swami by his life and

precept. The Swami learnt this creative aspect of religion at the feet of his Master who was a living embodiment of Vedanta in practice. But still some doubt whether or not this ideal of service is Hindu in origin. Some think it to be inspired by Christianity, forgetting the great fact that it existed in India long before Christ was even dreamt of. Others think in other ways. To give an illustration. Some orthodox people once paid a visit to a Sri Ramakrishna Home of Service. Seeing the Sannyasins as well as the Brahmacharins with the holy thread serving the patients, from the so-called high caste to the low caste, without any distinction—against what these visitors thought to be the principles of Varnashrama Dharma—they came to the conclusion that the Ramakrishna Mission was a Buddhist organisation ! It is a pride to the members of the Mission to be looked upon as followers of the Lord Buddha—who laid great stress on the practical application of the grand truths of the Vedic religion, and preached with a new power and meaning the ideals of India,—renunciation and service. But the source of this inspiration can be traced to the Upanishads—the perennial fountain-heads of Hindu spiritual life. Swami Vivekananda, as we have seen, no doubt, got the direct impulse from his great *Guru*. But the Master's life again was a part of the eternal spiritual current that has been flowng in an unbroken line since the dawn of Hindu religious consciousness that broke at a hoary antiquity into which history does not dare to peep.

The spirit of charity and compassion has been one of the dominating ideas of Hinduism. The Upanishadic sage declared—

त्रयो धर्मस्कन्धा यज्ञोऽध्ययनं दानमिति ।

" There are three branches of Dharma. The group of sacrifice, study and *charity* forms the first. "

एतत् त्रयं शिक्षेत् दमं दानं दयामिति ।

" Let the triad be taught—control of the senses, *charity* and compassion. "

Further—

श्रद्धया देयम् । अश्रद्धयाऽदेयम् । श्रिया देयम् । ह्रिया देयम् । भिया देयम । संविदा देयम ।

" Gifts should be given (to noble Brahmanas) with reverence ; it should not be given without reverence ; it

should be given in plenty, with modesty, with fear and with compassion."

Again—

मातृदेवो भव । पितृदेवो भव । आचार्यदेवो भव । अतिथिदेवो भव ।

"Let thy mother be to thee a god ; let thy father be to thee a god ; let thy teacher be to thee a god ; let thy guest be to thee a god."

Charity and compassion are extolled everywhere although some limitations are put on them at times.

Sri Krishna also declares in the Bhagavad Gita—

यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ।

"Sacrifice, *gift* and austerity are purifying even to the wise."

Charity sometimes has its restricted sphere. But the Lord also speaks of the saints whose love carries away everyone in its sweep.

लभंते ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृषयः क्षीणकल्मषाः ।

छिन्नद्वैधा यतात्मानः सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥

"With imperfection exhausted, doubts dispelled, senses controlled, *engaged in the good of all beings,* the Rishis obtain absolute freedom."

Sri Krishna further enumerates the following attributes of one born for a divine state—

अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोधस्त्यागः शांतिरपैशुनम् ।

दया भूतेष्वलोलुप्त्वं मार्दवं ह्रीरचापलम् ॥

"*Non-injury,* truth, absence of anger, renunciation, tranquility, absence of calumny, *compassion to beings,* non-covetousness, gentleness, modesty, and absence of fickleness."

Non-injury and compassion to beings are two of the most noble characteristics of the holy life.

Love for all beings is the most dominating note in the lives of Hindu sages and saints. The sage Dadhichi, who laid down his life for the well-being of the gods, says in the Bhagavatam—

योऽध्रुवेणात्मना नाथा न धर्मं न यशः पुमान् ।

ईहते भूतदयया स शोच्यः स्थावरैरपि ॥

"Even inanimate objects feel sorry for him who does not earn Dharma and fame with the help of his perishable human body by showing compassion to all beings."

To the saint no sacrifice is too high if it brings about the well-being of others. The great devotee Prahlada prayed even for the welfare of those who tormented him. When asked by the Lord for boons he replied—

न त्वहं कामये राज्यं न स्वर्गं नापुनर्भवम् ।
कामये दुःखतप्तानां प्राणिनामार्तिनाशनम् ॥

"*Lord, I do not want any kingdom, nor worldly happiness, nor even escape from re-birth. What I want is the cessation of the affliction of all beings tormented by the* miseries of life."

The well-being of the noble souls consists in the well-being of others, for they belong to the great family of humanity which is God embodied. According to the Mahabharata—

"He alone is a knower of Religion who is the friend of all beings ; he who is intent on the welfare of all with act, thought and speech."

The Vishnupuranam again repeats the same idea, but declares at the same time that this love is born of the highest knowledge.

"Knowing the Supreme manifest in all beings, the wise extend love to all creatures without any exception."

As a matter of fact all the Puranas declare with one voice—

परोपकारः पुण्याय पापाय परपीडनम् ।

"Doing good to others is religion ; doing harm to others is sin."

This compassion or rather love for all creatures is a special mark of spiritual greatness. As Sri. Sankaracharya points out—

शान्तो महान्तो निवसन्ति सन्तो वसन्तवल्लोकहितं चरन्तः ।
तीर्णाः स्वयं भीमभवार्णवं जनानहेतुनान्यानपि तारयन्तः ॥

"*The great souls, calm and magnanimous, who do good* to others as does the spring, and who having themselves crossed *the dreadful ocean of birth and death, help others also to* cross the same without any motive whatsoever."

Selfish life means spiritual death. Hence it is that the true devotee prays to the Lord not only for the stilling of his mind and senses, but also for the expansion of his self through love for all beings—

अविनयमपनय विष्णो दमय मनः शमय विषयमृगतृष्णाम् ।

भूतदयां विस्तारय तारय संसारसागरतः ॥

"Oh Vishnu, remove my egoism, calm my mind, control my attachment for the mirage of the sense-objects, increase my *love for all beings*, and save me from the ocean of existence."

The old ideal of love and compassion has been handed down to us without any break through our various religious ceremonies and festivals in which acts of charity form an important part. It is especially manifest in our Sraddha and Tarpana ceremonies in which libations are to be offered not only for the peace of the souls of one's own relatives but also for all beings. And one has to repeat—

आब्रह्मस्तम्बपर्यन्तं देवर्षिपितृमानवाः ।

तृप्यन्तु पितरः सर्वे मातृमातामहादयः ॥

"Let the devas, sages, manes and men also all my relatives both on the father's and mother's sides—all beings from Brahma down to the blade of grass be appeased."

This ideal again is at the back of our charitable institutions. Our innumerable Chatrams and Dharmashalas sprinkled all over the country still give shelter and distribute food freely, sometimes even indiscriminately, to religious men, travellers and beggars. Charity, though mostly individual and rarely organised, undoubtedly plays a great part in our collective life even to-day.

In inaugurating the Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Vivekananda placed before the country the ideal of making charity, discriminative and organised. But his speciality lay in the fact that following his Master, he went to the logical conclusion of the ideals of charity and compassion. He refused to make in service any invidious distinctions of caste or religion. Besides, he saw that from the standpoint of humanity, the poor and the ignorant stood in urgent need of charity and service more than others. His heart overflowed with love for the indigent and the down-trodden. And he passionately appealed to the young men of his country—"I bequeath to you young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. Vow then to devote your whole lives to these millions going down and down every day...... You have read : मातृदेवो भव । पितृदेवो भव । 'Let the mother be as god to you ; let the father be as god to you.' I say :

दरिद्रदेवो भव । मूर्खदेवो भव । The poor, the illiterate, the ignorant the afflicted—let these be your God. Know that service to these alone is the highest religion." The ideal of service is not only not antagonistic, but is in full accord with the highest course of conduct of every true religious Hindu. It implies a wider application of the पञ्चमहायज्ञ or the five forms of scriptures enjoined on all high caste Hindus—ब्रह्मयज्ञ or the study of the scriptures, दैवयज्ञ or the offering of oblations to the gods, पितृयज्ञ or giving libations to the forefathers, नृयज्ञ or offering food to human beings, and, भूतयज्ञ or offering food to even lower beings." Service—physical, intellectual and spiritual—to all human beings, high or low, is only a practical application of नृयज्ञ which literally means 'sacrifice to human beings." All these are the spiritualised forms of दया or compassion manifesting themselves in दान or acts of charity— an ideal which our modern age so urgently needs. The great Manu has declared—

तप: परं कृते युगे त्रेतायां ज्ञानमुच्यते ।
द्वापरे यज्ञमेवाहु: दानमेकं कलौ युगे ॥

"Penance is the special pursuit of Satya Yuga, knowledge of the Treta Yuga, sacrifice of the Dwapara Yuga and charity of the Kali Yuga."

This dark, iron age of ours can be transformed into the golden age, if following in the footsteps of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, we can perform all our acts of charity—whether it is physical relief or imparting of secular education or spiritual ministration—in the spirit of service and worship to the Lord whom the Upanishadic sage addressed in the following inspired words—

त्वं स्त्री त्वं पुमानसि त्वं कुमार उत वा कुमारी ।
त्वं जीर्णो दण्डेन वंचसि त्वं जातो भवसि विश्वतोमुख: ॥

"Thou art man, Thou art woman, Thou art youth, Thou art maiden, Thou as an old man totterest along on Thy staff. Thou art born everywhere."

May we all strive to realise this grand ideal of service to the God in man and bring blessings to ourselves and to the whole world !

EDITORIAL NOTES

THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION CONVENTION

THE first week of this month witnessed a unique event in the annals of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission in the holding of the Convention of the entire body of the monastic and lay members, for the first time. It was in the year 1886 that the Great Master, with whose name the Math and the Mission are christened, attained Maha-samadhi leaving behind a small band of fourteen young souls fired with the enthusiasm of his uncommon renunciation and purity, and saturated with his breath of spirituality and God-intoxication. Immediately after the physical disappearance of their Master, they grouped themselves together under the leadership of Swami Vivekananda of hallowed memory, and started a small monastery in an almost dilapidated house in the little village of Baranagore near Calcutta. That was the beginning of the organisation now known as the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. Since then forty years have rolled down the stream of time, and the seed that was laid in the Baranagore Math has developped into a mighty tree having ninety-two stout branches not only spreading all over this *Punyabhumi* of Aryavarta, but also extending to distant shores across the seas; and the fourteen disciples have created an army of four hundred and fifty to rally round the standard of Sri Ramakrishna, having dedicated their all to serve him and him only in life. The life Sri Ramakrishna breathed into his Sannyasin disciples, had a wonderful dynamic force, the full unfoldment of which it will take some centuries, perhaps, to make. The early chapter of this brotherhood is filled with the intense life of *Sadhana, Tapas* and self-abnegation, though it lay in entire obscurity. In that period, the sole endeavour of the Swamis had been to bring about complete self-effacement through God-realisation, and make themselves perfect conduits for the outflow of the spiritual energy that their Divine Master had roused in himself by his unparalleled life of spirituality. Indeed, that was the period of great conservation and of laying the foundation.

When the conservation was complete, the soul of the brotherhood burst forth through the voice of its leader Swami Vivekananda in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, for

the first time. The dynamism of his message and the puissant soul of the messenger himself were so telling that the whole of the civilised world could not help from being stirred to listen him. Both the message and the messenger at once became known to all, in the year 1893. With this the period of conservation and obscurity ended, and a new chapter was opened. From that time forward till 1902 which marks the close of the earthly career of the great Swami, the sole endeavour of Swami Vivekananda and his brother disciples had been to deliver the great message of spirituality and harmony of their Master and to give start to a huge tidal wave of spiritual energy that may one day engulf the whole of this earth. During this first period of radiation, Swami Vvekananda and the other Swamis travelled through many lands, both of the East and of the West, strewed broadcast the message of their Master, and showed by their wonderful life that religion is not merely a matter of faith and God is not a make-belief, but religion is life, is being and becoming,—and God can be rendered into as much a permanent factor of our consciousness as any experience of this objective world, nay even more,—God is the basic reality of Life, the central pivot of the Universe ! It is known to all that copy-book maxims produce but little permanent effect upon the human mind, and the empty logomachy of theologians can make no man religious. It is only life which can produce life. The life that was breathed by Sri Ramakrishna into his disciples began to have fine efflorescence through their lives in turn. All those who came into close contact with these wonderful spiritual souls, could not but be warmed up by their fire of spirituality and renunciation, and thus the spiritual progeny of Sri Ramakrishna began to grow, or may we be permitted to say, there began the recruiting of soldiers for the spiritual army, of the Master to combat with the forces of darkness and degeneracy which were found let loose in human society. Indeed, but for Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples, who could have rehabilitated the truth of spirituality and religion in human society in these days of materialism and empirical test ? With the advancement of material science and its importunate demand for experimentation, the religions of faith were shaken to their very foundations, the doctrine and dogmas of the churches were being pulverised under its sledge-hammer-blows, and the popular mind was swinging between the two extremes of credulity or faith and incredulity or atheism. At this juncture, it was the

appearance of Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples that saved the situation by holding out the redeeming light of *true* religion,—not the religion of the theologians, but the religion of God-communion and God-realisation. Making religion their profession and means of livelihood, and being unable to rise to the true demand of religion, the theologians of all religions always tried to compromise the real soul of religion with their own life, by obscuring the texts of their scriptures with false interpretations, and deluded their respective votaries by saying that religion consists simply in the pinning of one's faith to the letters of the scriptures, in the observances of certain laws of ethics and in becoming gentle sheep of their fold. This sort of religion cannot always satisfy the demands of the ever-growing rational faculty of man. So it is but natural that in these days of empiricism man should ask for concrete proof of the reality of the articles of faith. The message of Vedanta and of universal harmony that Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda preached to the world at once satisfied the utmost demands of human reason. They first showed that God and truths of religion are realisable and ought to be realised in life, if one aspires to be truly religious ; mere passive faith in God or dogmas of the church cannot save a man from the sufferings and bondages of life. Faith is, no doubt, the starting point of religion, provided it is dynamic in its assertion on conduct and influences the entire outlook of life of a man. But that is just the beginning of religion, and if faith is really dynamic, it must gradually mature into *Bhakti*, *Jnana* and *Yoga*, ultimately culminating in God-realisation and self-effacement. As the Sruti says— श्रद्धाभक्तिज्ञानयोगादवेहि These Swamis first realised God themselves and showed to the world how that realisation is possible for all. They further proved that religion never contradicts reason, but fulfils and transcends it. They showed again by their precepts and practice that as there is one God, so there is but *one* Religion, and that is the Absolute Religion of God-realisation,—it is the transcendental state of consciousness beyond all reason and sense-perception, beyond all conditions of time, space and causation, and as such there cannot be any variety there ; but when the same Absolute Truth descends to the plane of relativity and is perceived by the human mind through its innate limitations, it assumes multifold aspects, and these are the many religions of the world. And so, in reality, there is absolutely no contradiction or conflict between religion and

religion inasmuch as they are but so many approaches, or so many paths leading to the same hill-top of God-realisation on which is situated the real temple of God.

To India herself, the message of Swami Vivekananda was much more life-giving and dynamic in its effect. It has produced a new epoch in her history, and all those who are wide-awake to the current of thought that has enlivened the modern generation, know it fully how much life the Swamiji has breathed into her almost corpse-like body and has brought out the present revivification. Almost all the master-minds of India that have preceded him, beginning from the early days of the nineteenth century, were outlandish in their inspiration and alien in their outlook. It was Sri Ramakrishna who for the first time exhibited to the outside world, the spiritual soul of Indian culture and the unfathomable depth of the Sanatana Dharma. Once Swami Vivekananda spoke referring to the mind of his Master that it was vast like the sky and deep like the ocean, and we may add that it was the true and concrete presentation of the all-comprehensiveness and profundity of this Soul of India. And perhaps to show the singular nature of this grandeur of the Hindu Soul, the Master chose to remain unlettered, kept his mind unsophisticated and untarnished by what is commonly called Modernism. But history records that before the magic of his wonderful mind, the most up-to-date men like Keshab Chandra Sen or Protap Chandra Mazumdar felt charmed and captivated, nay even humbled, and a current of his magnetic influence even travelled across the seas and touched powerful minds like that of Prof. Max Muller. And as it has been already said, Swami Vivekananda disseminated broadcast only the message of this wonderful man whom he considered as the manifestation of that Ancient Soul—*Purusha Purana*—who graces this mother Earth of ours from time to time whenever there arises the need for a new adjustment of life and for a religious revival.

The second chapter of the history of the Ramakrishna Mission covers a short period of nine years of ministration by the great Swami. During this short period, he delivered his message to the world at large and to India in particular, and showed her the path of redemption. At home, he opened the eyes of the country to the inestimable treasures that lie buried under the debris of ages, and exhorted his countrymen to claim them as their rightful heirs. And thus he gave

birth to that spirit of nationalism which is pulsating so vigourously throughout the land to-day. To the outside world he showed the glory of our Indian culture and Vedic religion, and asserted in unerring terms that they stand, at the present day, in need of the spiritual culture of India as a correlative and as complementary to their own. But his time was too short and he knew full well the limit of the period of his ministration : he had to crowd all his messages and work within the short period of nine years. He often used to say, "I have no time to give finish to my utterances. I have a message and I must deliver it as quickly as possible, as I am to hurry back." And indeed this second period of the life of the Mission was mainly occupied by the deliverance of his message. Still, during his life-time, he first permanently established the Headquarters of the organisation in the present Belur Math near Calcutta and opened four more centres of activity, one in Madras, another in Benares, a third in Murshidabad, and lastly in Mayavati in the Himalayas, with the help of his brother-disciples. Besides these he started also two centres in America, one in New York and another in San Francisco under the charge of Swami Abhedananda and Swami Turiyananda respectively. During the days of his *parivrajaka* life, he once remarked, "I am now conserving energy. One day I shall burst upon the society like a bomb-shell." And truly he *did* burst like a bomb-shell, but when the bursting took place, the world was dazed by the splendour of the light, and at that time it could not estimate what mass of energy he had let loose into the society. Now that his spirit has left its earthly tabernacle and the dazzling light has been screened from our vision by time, we are slowly realising the significance and power of that energy.

The Swami passed away on the 4th of July, 1902. For the time being, a gloom of uncertainty fell upon the brotherhood. Everybody felt as if the fly-wheel of the life of the organisation was going to be stopped. But in vain cannot be the advent of souls like Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and their divine force cannot be so little in its effect. The gloom was dispelled and the mist was scattered, and the ship of the Ramakrishna Mission was found plying quite safely in its course under a master helmsman in the late Swami Brahmanandaji of beloved memory. The third chapter of this

Mission opens with Swami Brahmanandaji as the leader and guide of the organisation. Next to the great Swamiji the hope and aspirations of Sri Ramakrishna rested upon Swami Brahmananda, who was considered by the brotherhood as the *Manasaputra* of the great Master. Sri Ramakrishna used to say of Swami Brahmananda that he was one born perfect (a *Nitya Siddha*) and he possessed the administrative genius of a king (*Rajabuddhi*). And indeed the expansion and organisation that were effected in the Mission during his leadership speak volumes about his administrative qualities. Swami Vivekananda himself knew full well the great capacity of this brother-disciple of his, and left the whole task of organisation and consolidation of the work of the brotherhood in his hand even during his life-time. When Swami Vivekananda attained Mahasamadhi, the Mission possessed only about five or six centres and its strength consisted of twenty-five monastic members at the most. But under the fostering care and assiduity of Swami Brahmanandaji who was commonly known in the brotherhood as Sri Maharajji, the Mission grew into a mighty organisation, great in every respect and phenomenal in its expansion. For twenty years, from 1902 to 1922, the Mission was under the guidance of this great man, and during this period, the organisation grew into nearly fifty centres spreading all over India, Ceylon, Burma and Federated Malay States, and many foreign centres also sprang up, and the strength rose from twenty-five to three hundred and fifty. Under his inspiration these three hundred and fifty breathed like one man and nothing was too difficult or too hazardous for them to perform if they would once get the command from Sri Maharajji. Perhaps few leaders were more loved and adored by his followers than Swami Brahmanandaji. In fact everybody felt, during his life-time, that he was the organisation itself, as if he filled, by his intelligence and spirit, the entire body of the brotherhood. Every limb so closely felt the quickening impulse emanating from him that, at that time, though the Mission did not possess very many aspects of a great organisation, yet it can be said safely that there were very few organisations which could rival the Ramakrishna Mission in points of harmony, unity of purpose and co-ordination. His power of unification was simply marvellous, his knowledge of the organisation both individually and collectively was very thorough, and his decisions used to

be so masterly that they could not be equalled or substituted by any other.

This third epoch of the history of the Ramakrishna Mission is chiefly marked by expansion and organisation. The great impetus that Swami Vivekananda gave to the national life, and his ideas which were strewn broadcast in the country, first produced the great upheaval of nationalism in Bengal in the years 1905-06 and brought about such a great change in the outlook of life that young Bengal unhesitatingly made *him* the hero and ideal of their life. His words of renunciation and service were taken up by them as their watchword. And thus many young souls of Bengal turned towards the Belur Math for the waters of life and inspiration. In other parts of India, the clarion call of the great Swami did not fall on deaf ears. Everywhere the Hindus were awakened to a sense of appreciation of their past heritages and to the needs of the present time. And naturally from everywhere calls upon the Ramakrishna Mission to open its centres of activities began to grow more and more numerous and importunate in demand. And thus slowly the field of activity of the Mission began to get enlarged and complex in its nature. What Swami Vivekananda dreamed but could not materialise in his life-time, was given a tangible shape by the genius of Swami Brahmanandaji. If Sri Ramakrishna is the soul of the Ramakrishna Mission, if Swami Vivekananda is the dreamer and founder of the same, Swami Brahmanandaji is the organiser and consolidator of the brotherhood.

With the Mahasamadhi of Swami Brahmanandaji in the year 1922, the Mission has entered the fourth chapter of its history. The momentum that it gathered during the life-time of its former President is still carrying it on and the process of expansion is going on in an undiminished way. The centres have grown from fifty to ninety-four, and the strength also has increased to four hundred and a half, and the demand upon its work and workers is ever growing. It feels to-day more keenly perhaps than ever before the truth of the old saying that "harvest is plenty but labourers are few". So upon entering this new period of life, the authorities of the Mission felt an imperative need to reorganise and consolidate it more effectively to carry on its mission of *Siva* and *Seva*. Hence was the holding of the convention of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

It often happens with the efflux of time, that when an organisation grows in its extensity of life and work, its intensity decreases, and its firm hold upon the ideal is slowly loosened, and therefore the leaders of the organisation find it expedient to hold such conferences and conventions from time to time to muster all the different straggling forces to revivify and intensify the collective consciousness and bring about a consolidation of the organisation. This used to be the case with all ancient religious brotherhoods like Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity, as the Secretary of the Mission, Swami Saradanandaji, remarked in his opening speech. The Mission tried to adopt the same old path. In the case of an individual struggling for the realisation of the ideal, it is often found imperative to recount the conduct of the past in order to shape the plan of the future, through the process of self-analysis and self-determination. This is also true of a body of individuals organised for the achievement of a great purpose. These conventions and conferences are simply meant for that. And after going through the recent sessions, all the members of the Mission felt that they *have* achieved a *great* thing for the betterment of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

In the first place, as the representatives of the different centres, the senior Swamis of the Mission and many monastic members of the order assembled together in such a large number for the first time, they got the best opportunity of knowing each other better than before. Further the comprehensive nature of the organisation was brought home to the mind of each individual member very vividly. Thirdly, the collective consciousness and spirit of brotherhood that was roused in this congregation was very telling in its effect. Very many important resolutions were passed by the assembly for better consolidation and more effective working of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. The one point towards which the mind of the entire assembly gravitated was to subordinate expansion to consolidation, work to the right spirit, the practical to the ideal, in short, *Seva to Siva.* Expansion and growth is good, because it is the sign of life, but it is the life that should expand and there must not be any expansion by accretive growth ; work is good, because no life is possible without it, but it should be the expression of the spirit within and not merely the frenzied dance of a morbid frame or the uncontrolled activity of a delirious patient ; *Seva* is glorious,

because it kills our selfishness and purifies our heart, but it can do so only when it is done for the Siva in man ; otherwise it brings bondage and increases egoism. Further, the convention revealed to the members of the Math and Mission another great fact, that the spirit of Sri Ramakrishna and of Swami Vivekananda is still working at the back of the organisation and will achieve everything that has to be achieved. The best worker would be only he who would bring about complete self-effacement and dedicate himself as an humble instrument in their hands. Otherwise, what explanation can we offer for such wonderful feats as have been achieved by some of the most humble workers of the Mission without any pretension to learning and other qualifications ? All those who were present in the convention felt the spirit of the Master unmistakably. The convention was thus successful in many ways. It has given a fresh impetus to the organisation for the life of service and worship, and we pray to the Almighty to give it the proper strength and clarity of vision to follow the Light that once appeared in Dakshineswar and Whose splendour has filled now the whole world.

Om Santi ! Om Santi !! Om Santi !!!

NEWS AND REPORTS

Swami Sharvananda who has been the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission in Madras since 1911 and has been editing the VEDANTA KESARI from its very start is retiring from work after nineteen years of strenuous labour. He means to lead at present a life of perfect solitude and retirement.

Swami Yatiswarananda who has been in charge of the Ramakrishna Ashrama in Bombay for nearly the last two years has come over to take charge of the Math and Mission in Madras. He has spent eight years of his monastic life in South India and has an intimate knowledge of several of its parts. He is the late editor of the Prabuddha Bharata and is well-known for his scholarship and literary abilities. He was also intimately connected with the editorial work and the publication of the VEDANTA KESARI for a long period. Our Journal will appear under his editorship from May next. All official correspondence must hereafter be addressed to him. We pray to the Lord to crown his work with complete success.

Swami Sharvananda takes this opportunity of expressing his deep sense of gratitude and sincere thanks for all the innumerable tokens of cordiality, help, and co-operation which he has received at the hands of his numerous friends in the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay, in other parts of India, and in Ceylon, Burma and the Federated Malay States and which enabled him to carry on his work all these years. May the Lord's blessings be upon them all !

THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION CONVENTION

The Ramakrishna Math and Mission convention which was held for the first time in April last at Belur Math on the banks of the Ganges in the district of Howrah was a unique and momentous gathering. It was largely attended by both the monastic and lay members of the Order. Ninety-four centres of the Math and Mission which are being managed by the Order had sent their representatives to attend the convention.

The convention opened on the morning of the first of April with *homa,* chanting of *mantras,* and devotional songs. At 7 A. M. His Holiness Srimat Swami Saradanandaji, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, delivered his address of welcome which was listened to with rapt attention by the audience. He said that the movement started by Swami Vivekananda in the name of his Master had already passed through the first two stages of opposition and indifference and now has come the time when the ideas of the Mission are largely accepted. The Brotherhood had done excellent work but greater work yet remains to be done. The success of the movement in the future depends

entirely on humility, the right and intensive spirit of work, the readiness of the members of the Brotherhood to merge their individuality in their Ideal, and their becoming fired with zeal for united thought and action. A copy of the address in Bengali was also read out.

Then came the speech of His Holiness Srimat Swami Sivanandaji, the President of the Convention. It was read out by Swami Paramananda who had come from America as a representative of the Mission centres there. The speech explained in brief the objects of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission which were started by Swami Vivekananda with the two-fold ideal of attaining one's own liberation and working for the good of humanity. The Math and Mission are not two separate bodies. The distinction between the two is a purely technical one made for facilities of work. Renunciation and service are both to be combined and charcter is to be cast in the mould of Sri Ramakrishna's life by following the paths of *Bhakti, Jnana, Karma* and *Yoga*. Work is not to degenerate into a form of mere social activity but must be wedded to worship. The President blessed those present in the name of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. A Bengali version of the speech was also read out. The meeting adjourned at 11 A. M., after the election of members to the Subjects Committee which was to meet and discuss various topics concerning the work and other matters, with a view to form resolutions and place them for consideration before the Trustees and the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

The convention lasted for eight days. At the regular sittings, reports of 113 centres were read. The reports contained information about the various forms of work done by the Math and Mission through all its branches—preaching, publication, education and philanthropy.

The regular sittings were interspersed with three public meetings in which various learned speakers, monastic and lay, spoke on the ideas, ideals and activities of the Ramakrishna Mission. Among the speakers were Swamis Saradananda, Akhandananda, Suddhananda, Sharvananda, Paramananda, Madhabananda, Yatisvarananda, Jnaneswaradanda, Nirvedananda, Nikhilananda, Vipulananda and Principal Kamakhyanath Mitra. All the speakers dealt with the principles of Sanatana Dharma nanda, Nikhilananda. Vipulananda. and Principal Kamakhvanath Mitra. All the speakers dealt with the principles of Sanatana Dharma in the light of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Public meetings were also held in which lectures on sanitation and social service were delivered by eminent men.

The convention came to a close with a short speech by the President who invoked the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda on the Brotherhood.

Never before in the history of the Order has there been such a unique gathering of monastic and lay members from all the quarters of India and abroad. The movement has grown considerably in extent and responsibilities. The convention afforded an excellent opportunity for the comparing of notes among the various workers and closer coordination of the various branches of activities for the purpose of improvement, consolidation and expansion.

MAHASAMADHI OF SWAMIS SUBHANANDA AND SATCHIDANANDA

We announce with deep feelings of sorrow the passing away of Swamis Subhananda and Satchidananda in April last..

Swami Subhananda, popularly known as Charu Babu, was one of the best and most capable workers of the Ramakrishna Mission. He was a disciple of Swami Vivekananda who, fired with the noble ideal of service, started the Ramakrishna Home of Service (*Sevashrama*) in Benares which is to-day one of the most noteworthy monuments of philanthropy in India.

Swami Satchidananda joined the Order of Sri Ramakrishna during the time of Swami Vivekananda. He was all along living a strict ascetic life. Possessed by a desire to live the life of a *Parivrajaka,* he travelled all over India on foot during a period of his life.

May the souls of the noble departed rest in peace at the feet of the Lord !